

POEA market update

No. 03 Series of 2017

AUSTRALIA REFORMS TEMPORARY EMPLOYER SPONSORED SKILLED MIGRATION PROGRAM

The Department of Foreign Affairs has reported on the reforms to Australia's temporary employer sponsored skilled migration program. The reforms include the abolition of the Temporary Work (Skilled Subclass 457 Visa) and its replacement with a completely new Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa in March 2018. The TSS aims to support businesses in addressing genuine skills shortages and will contain safeguards, which prioritize Australian workers.

The following are the changes, scope and implementation timeframes for the said reforms:

1. Starting 19 April 2017, for the existing 457 visa:

Occupation lists – This list relating to 457 visa will be condensed from 651 to 435 occupations (216 occupations removed) and access to 59 other occupations restricted. Of the 435 occupations, access to 24 occupations has been restricted to regional Australia i.e., occupations relating to farming and agriculture.

Validity – The maximum duration of 457 visas issued from this date for occupation that are on the Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL) will be two years while occupations on the Medium and Long Term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL) will continue to have a four-year duration.

2. Starting 01 July 2017, for the existing 457 visa:

Occupation lists – The STSOL will be further reviewed while the MLTSSL will be revised.

English language requirements – English language salary exemption threshold, which exempts applicants whose salary is over \$96,400 from the English language requirement, will be removed.

Training benchmarks – Policy setting about the training benchmark requirement will be made clearer in legislative instruments.

3. Before 31 December 2017, for the existing 457 visa:

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection will commence the collection of Tax File Number for 457 visa holders (and other employer sponsored migrants) and data will be matched with the Australian Tax Office's records to ensure that visa holders are not paid less than their nominated salary.

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MAY 22 2017

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